

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 262 580

FL 015 242

AUTHOR Grossberg, Daniel; DeBenedetti, Jana
TITLE Individualized Instruction in Hebrew.
PUB DATE Oct 84
NOTE 6p.; In: Teaching Languages in College. Communicative Proficiency and Cross-Cultural Issues. Proceedings of a SUNY-Albany Conference (Albany, NY, October 19-20, 1984). For proceedings, see FL 015 232.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; Communicative Competence (Languages); Cross Cultural Studies; *Cultural Awareness; *Hebrew; Higher Education; *Individualized Instruction; Intercultural Communication; Introductory Courses; Program Descriptions; *Second Language Instruction; State Universities; Teacher Education; Teacher Role; *Videotape Recordings
IDENTIFIERS State University of New York Albany

ABSTRACT

The Hebrew program at the State University of New York at Albany uses a variety of instructional approaches tailored to individual learning styles. A major program component is the use of 108 half-hour videotaped lessons that include opportunities for student response, graphics, and skits demonstrating and eliciting appropriate usage. Many of the tapes bring the student into Israeli society through the experiences of a young American tourist, whose beginning-level Hebrew improves along with that of the students. The instructor is a resource person who serves as a model for oral work, provides tutorial assistance, and suggests alternative learning strategies. A variety of scheduling options is available to the students, who pace themselves in learning and testing. Advanced Hebrew students may enroll in a practicum to work with the teacher in the lower level classes. The videotape-centered program featuring linguistic/cultural interrelationships has these advantages: (1) students learn to communicate by translating meaning, not words; (2) vocabulary items are presented in expanded speech acts; (3) historical development in the language is evident; (4) stress is on both verbal and nonverbal communication; (5) culture conflict and its resolution are illustrated; and (6) the role of Israel as a center of immigration is shown. (MSE)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

Individualized Instruction in Hebrew
Daniel Grossberg and Jana DeBenedetti

At the State University of New York at Albany, Hebrew language education is identified with exciting and innovative programs and methods of instruction. These are well received and undoubtedly account for the vibrant Hebrew program--even as some other foreign language departments at SUNYA are in a state of decline.

Elementary Hebrew, corresponding to the first eight credits in the language sequence, is taught using several correlated methods including: videotapes, audiotapes, workbooks, textbooks, class sessions, and tutorials. These several modes of instruction appeal to the various learning modalities of the students. The students are able to concentrate on those instructional methods that are most effective for them.

The mainstay of the program is the series of one hundred-eight video-taped one-half hour lessons. The lessons are not merely "canned" lectures; they include response opportunities for the student, graphics and skits demonstrating and eliciting the proper use of the language. These highly sequenced televised lessons further provide maximum exposure to students of an exceptionally gifted teacher. The quality and level of excellence of each lesson is insured. The standard of performance on the pre-recorded lesson is consistently high and not subject to the daily vicissitudes of a "live instructor."

Based on the principle that language is essentially a medium for acquiring knowledge and understanding of a culture, a primary technique employed in these videotapes is to remove the student from the world of the classroom to the place where the language is used naturally, in Israel. For a large number of the tapes the student is "moved" into Israeli society through the experiences of a young American tourist, Dani. In his travels, Dani encounters numerous situations typical of Israeli life. The students thereby are confronted with aspects of Israeli culture and mores, life and tradition. The college student readily identifies with the American tourist who speaks Hebrew with an American accent and mannerisms, and with the typical grammatical errors that most learners fall prey to. In each successive unit, however, both Dani and the student gain proficiency.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

- 108 -

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Arnulfo H. Ramirez

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED262580

FL615242

The SUNYA program has individualized its instruction by enabling students to take advantage of variable pacing and mastery-based learning. They learn at their own pace rather than one set by the instructor. They may earn two to eight academic credits at the rate at which their time and effort permits, within some specified time constraints. The course work is divided into a series of learning segments called "modules." Students are required to master the material in each module and to present themselves for a mastery test.

Learning is not teacher-centered since the instructor ceases to be the orchestrator of classroom activities. Instead, the instructor becomes a resource person who may serve as a model for oral work, provide tutorial assistance and suggest alternative learning strategies. The students are given considerable latitude in determining the rate at which to learn the material, in deciding when to come for lessons, and in choosing test dates. This program provides students with both the opportunity and resources to assume greater responsibility for their learning experience. The program has been especially effective in meeting the needs of students with varying backgrounds and various reasons for studying Hebrew, but has obviously been less effective for students with little self-motivation. In order to provide specific instruction in accordance with each individual's needs, the students attend an orientation session at the beginning of each semester. At this time they are informed of the operational procedures and their responsibilities. They also fill out a personal information card explaining their reasons for studying Hebrew, their background in language learning, the proposed number of credits for the semester, and other pertinent information.

The introduction of any innovative mode of instruction entails the added expense of teacher training, teaching assignments, preparation of materials, and new record keeping procedures. Most of these challenges have been met at SUNYA through a Hebrew Practicum course. The Hebrew Practicum students are advanced Hebrew students who register for the Practicum course for four credits a semester. This entails a weekly seminar in addition to staffing hours in the individualized program. In the weekly seminar, these students and the Hebrew professor study the language elements in depth, prepare teaching strategies and materials, and review the beginning students' progress and needs. The practicum students gain language proficiency and pedagogical

skills while developing material and helping to instruct the learners in the individualized program--all at little or no monetary expense to the department or to the university.

At SUNYA we also provide the students with an option of a more conventional learning environment. In this program the student enrolls in a four credit course with five class meetings per week. On four days the students view the half-hour videotapes in a class setting along with a practicum student. In order to avoid the pitfall of impersonalization, each televised lesson is augmented by a half-hour class session led by the practicum students, immediately following each viewing. Additionally, the elementary Hebrew students participate in a weekly one-hour class with the professor. Mastery tests are administered on audiotapes at predetermined dates throughout the semester. The students in this program are thus assured of a standard four credits in each of the first two semesters of Hebrew language learning. The material is identical in both courses, and the first semester of the class setting corresponds to the first four credits of the individualized program. After one semester or four credits of individualized instruction, a student may choose to finish the last four credits in teacher taught class. However, no student may earn more than eight credits in any combination of the two programs.

The individualized program meets in a room called the Merkaz (the Hebrew word for "center"), the Hebrew Learning Center. The videotapes, playback machines and monitors, audio cassettes and players are all used here. The students can use the Merkaz approximately thirty to forty hours a week when it is staffed by the instructor or practicum students. It is open various hours during the week including early morning and late evening hours. Not only does the Merkaz play a vital role in the individualized program, but it has truly become a center for Hebrew at the university and even for the community at large. Other than the fact that its hours attract some non-traditional students into the individualized course, many other services can be offered as well. Perhaps the most obvious additional use for the Merkaz is to supplement the classroom version of the program. Students may view tapes which they feel they need to review, or they can even see tapes which they have missed in class due to an absence. They may also take advantage of Merkaz tutorials

whenever a question arises--without always having to wait for the next class meeting, or they may just wish to take advantage of the individual attention available in the Merkaz. Conversely, a student enrolled in the individualized program is welcome to sit in on the conventional classes. The Merkaz has a library of Hebrew reading material on various levels from children's books to novels, poetry to liturgy, Bible to Israeli newspapers and magazines, reference books to Hebrew games and music--all of which one can take advantage of while in the Merkaz. Occasionally someone will seek assistance in translating a letter from (or to) a friend or relative in Israel, and know that someone in the Merkaz can help. There are various levels of a "Hebrew Conversation Club" which meet here. One also finds groups of students from higher level classes working together on an assignment there.

The television medium is exciting; as a learning tool it has the advantage of providing for reviewing, reinforcement and analysis of the material conveyed. It tends to catch and keep the students' attention more easily than the normal classroom setting since it obviously provides many and various visual effects and changes scenes from skits to songs to blackboard lectures.

The television centered, innovative approach to Hebrew at SUNYA has several educational advantages. The ability to dramatically feature linguistic/cultural interrelationships is but one of these advantages. Some aspects of this are listed below:

1. The student learns to communicate by translating meaning rather than words (ideas and emotions rather than dictionary definitions). Some Hebrew grammatical and linguistic elements (as in every language) lend themselves to an understanding of the world which is different from that of the student's native language. These are presented in natural target-language situations.
2. Vocabulary items which go beyond a simple definition due to specific cultural presentations are presented within the expanded speech-act setting.
3. The historical development within the language is apparent in Hebrew which is both a classical and a modern language. The Scriptures are still readily accessible to the student of modern Hebrew. Scriptural elements and allusions abound in modern Hebrew and can be found in many of these lessons.
4. The television permits the stress of non-verbal as well as verbal cues. The entire gamut of the kinesic system is seen and dealt with. A

presentation of kinesics--the study of the relationship between non-linguistic body motions, gestures and communication is presented especially effectively via television.

5. Numerous "culture-clashes" are included in the video-taped dramatizations. The differences between Israeli and American cultures are seen in a problem-oriented approach.

6. Israel is a center of immigration from all over the world--linguistic, social, and dialectical differences are depicted dramatically on the T.V. screen.

Although the fundamental language elements are the same for all elementary classes, the university provides three tracks of Hebrew education usage, namely: literature, conversation, and Biblical and classical (or any combination of three). The elementary students in the individualized program indicate their purposes in studying Hebrew on their personal information cards, which enables the instructor to adapt the tutorials to the goals of the learners. A student planning a trip to Israel might emphasize spoken responses and colloquial expressions, whereas someone wanting to study Bible and liturgy (a pre-Ministerial student, for example) focuses on Biblical structures and vocabulary.

Since the inception of the individualized Hebrew program, elementary registration has steadily increased. The success of the program has led to additional machines, personnel, and a larger learning center. Along with the growth is an ongoing evaluation and modification of the program. SUNYA has obviously benefited from this individualized approach to learning Hebrew. Other language programs would do well to consider adapting this type of program to their own needs.